In Herskovits & Herskovits 8-8 (1928-1929) 1934
SRS Bush Negroes SRS
Saramacca

KUNU

We sat one night talking about the neku vine, which is used to poison the streams for fishing, and the ceremonies attending the discovery of a new one, how the ownership of it is passed on in the female line, and about the songs which are sung to celebrate the finding, and the feast which is given at this time.

"Do you use this poison only to catch fish, or does it have other uses?" we asked guardedly.

"Well, sometimes people use it to commit suicide," one man said. "That is bad. Sometimes a man or a woman will do it to put a kunu on another's family." He went on to tell of a man who lately did this. He had been promised the daughter of a family in this very village when the girl was a small, small child. It happened that the girl's uncles found gold in one of the streams, for which the white man gave them much goods, and now they were big men. Since the girl's children would inherit much wealth, they wanted her to be the principal wife of a man of rank. There were messages back and forth, and council meetings, but the uncles insisted that the girl return the gifts she had received —insisted against the advice of many people. So this *bio*, this young lad, could get his revenge in no other way than by taking his own life, and sending a kunu to the family.

"The next time you come you will probably see the kunu at work. It is always so. Of what use is wealth when the children begin to die? One year the crops are bad, and you have to buy food. One year you go from one obia man to the next to find out why your sister cannot make children. Your money goes. Kunu is a bad thing."

Another day a woman came to us with a comb to sell. She had heard that we were gathering pieces to put into a large house where carvings from Africa were being shown, and she wanted us to have this comb of hers which was made as a betrothal gift by her husband who was now many years dead. It was an old comb with several broken tines and holes bored into it by insects, but the decorated end was still very beautiful, and we were eager to buy it. When we asked her to explain to us the meaning of the design, she

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said, "It is not a woman and a snake, as you might imagine from this," and she indicated one or two lines of the design. "We do not carve the snake in my family. We have a *tchina*—a taboo—against carving snakes, for snakes are our kunu. . . . Years ago my brother went to the French shore and worked for a white man. The white man asked him to kill a snake, and he was afraid, but the white man laughed at him, and because he had a weak ak'a, because his soul was not strong, he killed the snake. If he had told us about it and had sent a piece of the snake, we would have held a burial, as would have been right. But he did not do as he should have done, and so now the snake is not a good spirit for us. We must give it offerings, and dance kunu. It is bad to have a weak soul. My brother did a bad thing, and now I and all my children, and my daughters' children, and their daughters' children on and on will have this kunu."

Farther up the river, in the deep interior, we stopped at the village of Opoku. As we walked to the house of the village head to give him our greetings, we noticed an unusually large house. It was a *lisa-wosu*, a house with an upper story, more substantially built than any we passed, and ornamented with elaborate carvings, as were all personal houses of the men. The owner of it, we heard, had been dead eight months. Four more would need to go by before it could be entered. It had been owned by a powerful man, and his belongings were many. We could see some of them through the openings between the slats which formed its walls—an apinti drum, magnificently carved, tall earthen demijohns of rum, boxes, the edge of a metal canister and a lamp. Inside there were guns, and machetes, and native carved paddles, and implements.

Our men joked about the contents of the demijohns as they passed, speculating on the strength of the rum when the containers were opened, and when we asked about the house later—whether, for instance, we could not buy the drum, we were told that the twelve-month interval between a man's dying and the dividing of his property was not yet passed. When the time came, his brothers and sisters

1: Herskovits & Herskovits E-5 (1928-1929) 1934
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Just above the Mamadam.

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Detail of boat—feline head on cowspiece.

[Facing P. 84]

1: Herskovits & Herskovits E-8 (1928-1929) 1934
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Saramacca

THE PROVISION GROUND

It is the woman's task, then, to see to the food which the Earth Mother yields, while the men are busy hauling lumber and making boats, hunting and fishing, and carrying the white man's loads to the city. In the leisure of the rainy season, while the women cut up the trade cotton cloth into long, narrow strips and sew them into cloths of traditional design, the men are at work carving fine things out of wood.

When the big rains come a man might busy himself carving doorposts for his new house, or he might make a paddle to put away in his personal treasure house, so that, when he is ready to take a second wife, he might have the proper gifts to make her. Another might be making a small canoe paddle for his first daughter. She is four, perhaps, and already is of help to her mother in the field, carrying water from the river in a small Indian jar. Soon she will be strong enough to have the cutting of the kamemba begin—a few slashes about the navel at first . . . He will cover the surface of the paddle with beautiful traceries, each design a meaningful symbol, and to add to its beauty he will darken it with a mixture of oil and charred rice hulls. When it is finished it will be of a reddish-brown color, slender, and smooth to the touch of his fingers as the skin of his woman-child. Combs, food stirrers, trays, stools, peanut pounding boards, and, if a man likes, mortar and pestle—all these are carved when the rains are heavy and there is no work to be done on the river or in the bush.

So the work is divided. A man does a man's work—wood, iron, hunting the game animals of the bush, and catching fish in traps, making baskets of wood fiber—all that is a man's affair he does. And the woman, tending the fields and cooking for her family, pounding palm nuts in her mortar to make palm oil, grating the bitter cassava to make flour free from the poison that is in the roots, caring for her house and carving calabash dishes with the symbols of men and women and fertility—woman does what it is woman's lot to do.

1:Herskovits & Herskovits E-8 (1929-1929) 1934
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968 "If it is the man who is dead, then the woman takes her
975 girl children to live with her, but her sons she sends away to live elsewhere. A man's spirit will not harm his daughters. He loves them. But his sons, he will kill. . . . When a woman dies, then it is the sons that the man will keep with him in the house, and the daughters must go away. The yorka of a woman will protect her sons, but she will destroy the daughters when she visits the place where she once lived."

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602 To her child the Bush Negro mother gives at birth
851 membership in all her own blood groups. The child is of her *wosu*, or household. He belongs to her *mbe*, or great family, which is an aggregate of many households. He is a member of her *lo*, or clan, which is composed of a number of great families, and which holds political sway over a given
613 portion of the land. The tie of all these groupings is a blood tie, a common female ancestress who lived long ago, or several women, daughters of the same mother, who had been the first to live with the runaway ancestors here in the bush, or several women who came from one people in Africa, and were the first to bear children to the rebels in the jungle. Every legal, every economic implication which this tradition of descent and inheritance through the female line might hold, is faithfully adhered to.

611 The mother does indeed count, as the tales told us in the
513 city insisted. But what of the father?

That the Bush Negro understands fully the rôle that
842 both father and mother play in the procreation of the
532 young was everywhere apparent. The wood carving which a father made for his young daughter had designs on it of the kind which bore the general designation "*wowei bo' moye*—man and woman." Whatever the traceries on the carvings given by a man to his woman during courtship, or after marriage, whatever animals might be represented, the essential symbolism was that of fertility, and the

11 Herskovits & Herskovits E-5 (1928-1929) 1934
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figures of a male and a female in congress were often introduced into the design.

The ignorance of the physical rôle of the male parent, said to exist among other primitive peoples with a similar linkage of relatives on the mother's side, is not found among the Suriname Negroes. At a religious ceremony in which townspeople alone were dancing, a woman turned to us, and said, "Now they are dancing Afrekete. When *Ma Aisa*—an Earth goddess—and *Pa Lebba*—he who guards the crossroads—make a child, it is called Afrekete." Similar genealogies of spirits were vouchsafed us by Bush Negroes as well, and always, there was the male god as well as the female, and always the recognition that both made the spirit which was their offspring.

These are examples derived from the art of the people, from their ritual, and from the concepts they have of the forces that actuate the universe. There also were many incidents to show the attitude of fathers and children toward each other in the everyday run of life.

Awingu did not hesitate when he answered that the child who was with him belonged to his wife. But he added that it was he who made him, and his affection for the little boy, and the child's fondness for him was apparent even to the casual onlooker. Kasanya, in talking to us about the kunu of his wife's family which had destroyed his sons, mourned them as a father. He had made them, and he had taught them to run the rapids, and to carve. He had given them his own gods to protect them, he told us when recounting the tragedy of the kunu which killed them. Misomba, the brother-in-law of Kasanya, had made Adyabu. There was no ambiguity about who the boy's father was. The boy was Kasanya's heir, but he was Misomba's son. Sedefo had brought the child to his brother Zimbi's coffin, saying, "I bring you your child. Try to protect him. . . ."

There was the matter of slipping. It is dangerous to slip. Losing one's step may bring the soul to the ground in an unguarded moment, where the earth spirits, or what

1tHerskovits & Herskovits E-5 (1928-1929) 1934
SR8 Bush Negroes SR8
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to be admired for their artistry, but there also for ceremonial purposes which were never divulged. When one of these benches was later taken down to show the magic of paper which, placed on the top of a carving and rubbed with black crayon, reproduced the design beneath, the Granman looked startled, and then ordered that it be replaced. Nor were other rubbings allowed.

On both sides of these massed benches were many objects which could barely be distinguished in the half darkness of the house. There were guns and canisters, there were a few native brooms, and several wrapped parcels. There was also an apinti drum on which the gods were addressed. Not even at Ma'lobbi, where the chief, a famous carver, showed us many remarkable products of his art, did we see designs worked with the fine, sure lines or the beauty of individual motifs such as were traced on this apinti. The carving was in relief and covered the entire surface of the drum, which stood about three feet high, curving outwards from the top, and resting on a narrow circular base which raised its body about six inches from the ground. It was covered with a deerskin that use and exposure to the atmosphere had stained unevenly to shades of amber.

Facing these carvings was the door which, itself of wood, swung on wooden hinges of native fashioning. In relief appeared the Earth Mother, and surrounding her were the symbols of fertility. No man, not even the Granman himself, dared speak her name in this council house. At trials, when oaths were taken, she might be appealed to, but to call her idly would bring down her wrath on the Granman's clan, and, perhaps not stopping there, since the council house was of all the clans, she would revenge herself upon all the people of the Saramacca River. The carving was more beautiful than on the apinti which stood against the opposite wall. The greatest artist on the river had made it.

"That man had the gods, ya-hai," the men said, when we talked of the Granman's carvings.

1: Herskovits & Herskovits E-5 (1928-1929) 1934
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Above the door was a shelf which did not quite reach the entire width of the wall, and on this shelf were the council benches, which the Granman supplied to the visiting chiefs. These benches were small, low, and as little ornamented with carvings as the work stools used by the women. But on the sides symbols were incised, and at least two of them we were able to identify as clan emblems. One of these had the conventionalized patterning of the hatchet, the emblem of the Granman's clan, and another a flower which is associated with the people from whose group come the principal diviners. The tops of these simple stools sometimes had inlays of dark wood, but whether their outlines were of ritualistic importance or not, no one would say.

From the beams hung several umbrellas, still inside the wrappings in which they had come from the white man's city, and a wickless metal lamp, into whose chains envelopes were inserted. These envelopes contained letters received by the Granman which awaited the coming of the missionary to be read, or letters which had already been read, and were there to add color to the official scene.

There were also other *Bakra sani*—white man's things—in the house. A canvas folding chair which filled almost an entire wall stood against the slats beside which, on the outside, were the earthen jars. This was for the Granman. He sat in it with the majesty of an emperor. No one ever approached it too closely, and we were never invited to take our ease in it when the Granman was in his own house.

In addition, there was a table in the center of the room, covered with a red and black plaid cloth from the city, and two straight-back chairs. On the table stood an alarm clock which was set for the noncommittal hour of twelve and a glass decanter filled with rum.

Chief And'u was the first to join us inside.

"It is fine here at the G'aman's."

"Yes, it is a fine house. And you, And'u, you look well in your coat. Is it when you are with the Granman that you dress so?"

1: Herskovits & Herskovits E-5 (1928-1929) 1934
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Combs, the gifts of men to women.

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A tray for winnowing rice. (Symbolism on pages 282-283.)

[facing p. 214]

11 Herskovits & Herskovits E-5 (1928-1929) 1934
528 Bush Negroes 528
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WOMEN AT WORK

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Tenemi made ready to carve a calabash dish. She sat down on her work stool, and on the ground beside her she put down a small knife, a piece of broken glass, and half of a calabash shell. The inner pulp had just been removed, and both the inside and outside of the gourd were of a pale green color. She had dipped it in water before she brought it here, and now with the point of her knife she deftly marked her design. The curves in the center, covering almost the entire inner surface, formed the body of a woman, she said, who was big with child. The geometric tracings in parallel narrow lines across one portion of the top was the Aboma snake, euphemistically called the G'an Tetei, the great creeper, or vine. Taking up the piece of glass, she began to scrape away carefully the soft pulp inside the outlines of her design.

In the entire village there was no woman who worked faster at carving calabash dishes than did Tenemi. In less than half an hour the dish was ready to be placed on the high platform where the maripa nuts were drying. With the sun upon it, the calabash would turn a deep cream color, but where the knife had borne down, it would show a golden brown, and where the glass had scraped away the pulp, the color would be a paler gold, so pale that it would be almost the cream of the unornamented outer surface.

"The large closed gourds are not done fast. Those are carved on the outside, and must be worked cleverly. But this does not take long. I am making this for you. When it is finished I will bring it to you. You must give it to your girl-child when she grows big."

She herself had made four children, but only two of them were living. The oldest, a daughter, carried a child in her womb. Tomorrow she would come to the village, and Tenemi would bring her.

"She was afraid to come. Women who are with child must be very careful."

1: Herskovits & Herskovits E-5 (1928-1929) 1934
SRS Rush Negroes SRS
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Carvings that women were eager to have admired: comb; clothes beater; tray.

[Facing P. 239]

1: Herskovits & Herskovits E-8 (1930-1939) 1934
[illegible] Negroes 365
Secretaria

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Ceremonial bracelets incised with symbols of fertility and magic.

[Facing p. 272]

1: Herskovits & Herskovits F-4 (1929-1930) 1934
[illegible] Bush Negroes [illegible]
Saramacca

and so close that our hands, moving about to find a rest, touched its top, and sounded an involuntary rhythm, was an apinti drum. We exclaimed at its beauty, for in form and carving it rivaled the one we had admired in the council house of Granman Yankuso, and we were determined to try to buy it. But we turned our conversation to other things. A stranger in this bush soon learns from the Bush Negroes to broach an important request gently, remembering the cautioning proverb spoken by the chameleon.

We talked of carving, of the white man's coming back some year when the rains were heavy to sit by and watch the men make paddles and benches, so that he might learn, as children learn.

The captain was politely skeptical. It took a Saramacca hand to do this work. But he smiled, "Ma kye, if you have the gods anything is possible."

"That's a fine paddle in the corner."

He brought it out, and we admired it. Would he sell it to us?

"You must ask its owner."

"Didn't you make it, captain?"

"Yes, but it is not mine to sell. I gave it to my wife." He would see, however, if she wanted to sell it. He would himself go and call her.

As he went, he gave us the paddle that we might examine it. We ran our hands over the smooth top, the design, the beveled blade. It was not so tall as the paddles used by the men, nor was its blade so broad as those used in steering the great boats through the rapids. In form, it was quite different from the round-bladed type used by the Indians of the region, for it was slender and came to a sharp point, and at the other end the carving formed a crutch-shaped hold into which the hand fitted.

We studied this carving. Parts of the design had meaning for us because of their realistic treatment. The motifs of others were recognizable to us from explanations we had been given of other carvings. But there were still details

530 501 502 of design which only the carver himself could name, or someone who knew the symbolism of the art tradition in which this paddle was carved.

530 193 During our first visit to these people we had been completely balked by the unwillingness of the Bush Negroes to discuss their carvings. In answer to our questions we got delightful evasions, but with the coming of Bayo to our base camp, carrying his crudely carved stool, we learned enough to make it clear that there was a great deal of symbolism in the carving of the Bush Negroes and, as our knowledge of these symbols increased, it became increasingly easier to get descriptions of carvings in terms of the meanings and values these held for the Bush Negroes themselves.

532 Now, sitting in the workshop of one of the finest of Saramacca carvers, the captain of Ma'lobbi, we traced those parts of the design which we knew, mentioning their significance to the men who were about.

"There are two snakes," we said, pointing to the realistically entwined bodies which formed the upper portion of the hand grip, ending at the top with recognizable heads, and with mouths held open, which supported symmetrical figures of the top of the paddle.

"Abuma snakes," one man said, verifying to himself our statement.

"These," we continued, "are the teeth of the great lizard—*dawdo tendi*—and this part below the hand-grip reaching part way toward the blade is a carved chain, and you call it *moni mi' meye*—money is more than woman."

The men laughed. "Awa, so it is. The man knows about Saramacca carving."

And one of them took up the explanation, pointing out the two symmetrical figures which were posed opposite each other above the mouths of the snakes. "These are monkeys. They are women monkeys. No, don't call them just keskesi, their name is makaka," he went on, giving us the name of the species, when we spoke the word for monkey. "See the ears, the heads, the breasts. Ai, I

In Herskovits & Herskovits E-4 (1929-1930) 1934
[illegible] Negroes [illegible]
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know you see them. They told you much on the upper river."

As he finished speaking, the captain returned with his wife. Excited comments greeted him.

"The white man here knows *tewale*—carving."

"He knows lizard's teeth design."

"He knew that this was the aboma snake, and the maloka."

The old man was skeptical. "*A so?* Was it true?" Let the Bakra show him.

We repeated the lesson we had just learned to the captain and his wife who owned the paddle. They listened thoughtfully. Then the woman spoke.

"White man, I have used this paddle for many years. I do not like to sell it. But you care for it. You are a man who knows carving. In your country you tell me other men know carving. They will look at it, and see it is beautiful, and they will know it is from the Saramacca. Take it, and pay me what you like."

There were other carvings which we bought—a large rice-carrying tray, and some food stirrers, one of which was especially fine, made as it was of two small paddles with miniature blades, the handles joined by a wooden ring-chain, and all of this carved out of one piece of wood.

3

Few things on the river seemed to the outsiders more characteristic of the life of the Saramacca people than these carvings which were met with everywhere, however small the village, however poor the home. When the seasonal rains came, men incised their desires on wood, which later told the legend of procreation, or safety on the river, or a curse invoked against a woman if she proved unfaithful; or something of humor, such as a man bidding for a girl's favor, and she refusing him, while up above intertwined were a man and woman, symbolizing the ultimate consummation with the proper suitor.

The greater part of these carvings men made for women, and it was a rare woman who did not take pride in the excellence of the carvings given her, though often it must have been the pride in something which had traditional value, for it would be false to assume that among any people are all men equally endowed with creativeness and all women with sensitive appreciation of what is created.

As among so many peoples, two or three types of art were to be found. There was the same sex division in the art of these people as existed in all other aspects of life, and the men were the wood carvers. The sharpest division in the art of the men was that between the secular and the religious. The religious art was crude. A block of wood, roughly shaped, with several cuts to indicate a face, perhaps a break in the line to represent the neck, and a few more strokes in the wood to differentiate the upper part of the woman's body, and there stood an ancestral image, or a village god. Often white clay was added to this, and sometimes alternate stripes of white and red, or white, red, and black, but when seen on a village path underneath a low open shelter, what color there once was had become weathered to a dull gray. The sacred art also included the charms called obias, worn on the neck, and about the upper arm, or wrist, or below the knee, or at the ankle. Many of these made pleasing ornaments. The white fiber dipped in red clay became a deep golden brown as the sun paled the crimson, and there would be the added color of a finger's length of blue and orange parrot feather, fastened inside the woven fiber square, and extending below the fringe of the weave. Into this woven square cowries might be sewn, two facing each other, or three, or four.

There was also the art of modeling, but this was so secret and so specialized that we were assured that not even all Bush Negroes knew of its existence, and modeled objects appeared only in the most important of the shrines.

With the religious art might also perhaps be grouped the red and white striped crooked sticks of the Kromanti

1: Herskovits & Herskovits E-5 (1928-1929) 1934
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society, the "Congo" sticks, as they were called here, or the "fighting" sticks. 532

The carvings, however, which we were admiring in the house of the captain of Ma'lobbi were for secular use. The Bush Negro craftsman brought to the ornamenting of his paddles and his canoe seats, to his house posts, and particularly to the door of his treasure house, to his women's combs, and trays, and food stirrers, and clothes beaters all the traditional skill and patience. But the exceptional carver brought also the cunning in his fingers which his gods had given to him and only to few others on the river. Such a man was the captain of Ma'lobbi. Into the traditional designs such a man wove lines for the love of seeing them grow under his hand, for there were always single motifs which the people versed in the symbolism of the art would describe as "beautiful," as having no meaning. Yet with few exceptions the massing of outlines in a unified design bore on fertility. Men and women alone or together, and male and female animals were represented in all but occasional pieces. [501]

The Bush Negro artist was a man of consequence on the river. His companions admired his skill, and the young women were proud to have his handiwork. If he showed his gifts early, he was at an advantage in courting a girl of an influential family. The girl's mother, who shared in the gifts of her daughter's suitor, might be willing to overlook other less advantageous traits in the man or in his family, while the girl's uncles would not be loath to have such a man in their family to teach his art to his sons, who would be their successors. 532 554 584

On several occasions we were permitted to see how very deeply this appreciation of fine carving went. As in the instance of the paddle we had acquired from the wife of the captain of Ma'lobbi, it had happened often that the consent of the woman to sell a given piece was necessary before any trading could take place. Sometimes we traded directly with the woman, sometimes she asked her husband, or her brother, or her son, as the more worldly 432 562 439

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person, to act for her. But always hers was the final word, and often that word when the time came for us to carry away the piece was "No."

"It was made for me by my husband when I was a young girl. Now he sleeps, he is no more. I want to have it," was a statement which ended all bargaining.

Sometimes even after we had paid the woman, and stored the piece away, she returned with the moist coins in her hand, asking for the carved implement.

"Before some man from here will go to the city to buy me a pangi, I may lose the money, or he may lose it on the way. But if the clothes beater is here, I can use it and look at it. I want to keep it."

One vivid incident of bargaining concerned a peanut pounding board which had belonged to the sister of Bassia Anaisi. We were sitting and talking with him and his grandmother, when our eyes rested on his sister's house. From a projection hung a strikingly beautiful piece of carving. The rectangular portion of the board on which the peanuts were crushed was bordered on top and bottom with filigreed carving. It was made of brown-heart wood with inlays of purple-heart. Bassia Anaisi's sister supplemented our guesses of what the designs meant. The top represented a woman's head and headdress. The small brass nails, which made a glistening line in the center of the upper curve, were the cicatrizations on the woman's face.

"Look," said the woman, "she is a woman, but a woman hawk. Here is her neck, and the small cut-out circles here are her breasts, those curves at both ends are the wings. The very small nails are the cicatrizations on the thighs. She is a woman, and she has made herself beautiful. This large rounded portion is her belly, and the smaller one underneath is the *gonu mofo*—the gun's mouth," the last being their image for the vagina. Meeting this from the bottom curving upwards was a half-circle, which represented the male member. At the other end was more embellishment. In the center was a double curve to symbolize the first phase of the moon. Below were two "*Ingi Kodyo*,"

M. Herskovits & Herskovits 8-5 (1928-1929) 1934
[illegible] Bush Negroes [illegible]
Surinam

Indian cudgels, a figure of speech for the buttocks, in this instance those of the woman, and again the male representation. This was edged with a border of deep curves which the woman said was mere ornamentation—scrolls. On another pounding board, however, of this village, a similar border was said to represent the boa constrictor. This board stood on two legs, each the width of the board and about two inches high, and worked in the same cut-through scroll design.

When we suggested that we might care to acquire the board, the woman became apprehensive. She took up the board, and excusing herself, disappeared with it inside her hut.

"No, no," she called from the house, when her brother went to tell her of the offer we had made for it. "I don't want money for it. I like it. I will not sell it."

The sum we offered was modest enough, but not inconsiderable for this deep interior. We increased it, then doubled our original offer. There was still no wavering on the woman's part, but the offer began to interest her family. Such wealth should not be refused. Bassia Anaisi began to urge her in our behalf.

"With this money you can buy from the white man's city a hammock, and several fine cloths. You should not refuse this."

The old woman took up the discussion, then another sister, and a brother. At last the bassia took us aside, and asked us to leave his sister alone with them.

"We will have a krutu, and tomorrow you will hear. She is foolish not to sell. But she cares for the board. It is good, too, when a woman loves what her man has carved for her. We will krutu about it, and you shall hear."

Three days passed before the woman's permission was given to dispose of the piece.

"When they see this, your people will know our men can carve!" she exclaimed in a voice which held as much regret as pride.

Herskovits & Herskovits B-6 (1933-1935) 1934
[illegible] Bush Negroes [illegible]
Surinam

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The cult of fertility came to the Surinam bush from Africa. Deeperated today in this civilization, it is not strange that it should be invoked again and again in the carvings, that men and women in sexual congress, and animals in the act of reproduction should dominate the art motifs, and in particular those carvings which men make for their women.

The symbolism is known to all on the river though, as we have indicated, a gifted artist might play with his medium, and even give his own name to what he had designed. Evidences of nontraditional playing with technique were, to be sure, not met with often, but one or two instances stand out. One that was especially striking was a hinged folding stool, fashioned after a bench seen in the city, and decorated in traditional fashion, where the problem of decorating unfamiliar surfaces was met.

Bayo could take up many of our photographs of pieces, acquired during our first visit and brought here into the bush to show the natives how their pieces were exhibited, and describe the symbols to us which made up the carvings. There was one which interested him especially. He used to sit with the photograph in his hand, running his fingers over the glossy surface, as though he felt if he continued doing it long he would actually feel the texture of the wood which was so clearly imaged.

"Evgrything shows. Here's a crack, see?" Then his hands touched one motif after another. "This and this are women, and these are men. A man and woman to one side, and a man and woman facing them. It's like having the tray here, white man." The small designs close to the rim of the tray, facing each other, were the children to be born of these unions. "This is a boy, and this a girl. That is for both women to make twins."

We were looking over his shoulder as he explained the symbols, but still could not distinguish in the symbols to the side which represented the male child and which the female.

M Herskovits & Herskovits E-5 (1929-1930) 1934
[illegible] Bush Negroes [illegible]
Saramacca

Bayo laughed. "All this isn't easy, white man. A line about this curve shows this to be a man-child. These are things bush people alone know."

The decorated rim of this tray had interested many who had seen the piece the winter before, and we had had pointed out to us what we ourselves had remarked, that the design was not continuous all around, but that it was divided into four parts, the crosshatched portion alternating with that of checkered squares. Did those have meaning? we asked Bayo.

"Ai, these belong to the women and the children. The small lines are the hair of the children, and the squares here that of the women." The brass-headed nails he touched one by one on the photograph. "The women have nice kamemba," he said, at last.

On the upper river we had acquired another tray with similar motifs, but more elaborately decorated, with carvings on the outer surface as well as the inner, and alop with many more brass-headed nails. This use of nails, which was more general in the deep interior, had at first seemed an anomaly, for they must come from the white man's city, since the Bush Negro, we knew, had lost the African technique of iron working. But as we saw more deeply into their customs, we recognized that these nails studding the carvings represented a survival of the African art tradition, and it was, therefore, reasonable that in the deep interior they should be found more profusely on the carvings.

Human representations outlined with the realism of African masks we almost never met, and the exceptional instances suggested only resemblances. The mask itself, as far as we could learn, was not used in their dances. The men knew what masks were, but whether this knowledge came as part of their African tradition, or whether it was brought from the city and the French shore, we could not determine. The African style of depicting the human form had, however, not been entirely lost by their slave ancestors. In this village of Ma'lobbi, where lived one of the finest carvers on the river, the carving over a doorway held us

538 fascinated. It showed, in its purest form, the retention of the African mask-like head. Sometimes on the prow of a boat we would see in cruder form the outlines of a mask, and once an old woman came with a food stirrer to us. Its handle ended in a knob which with a few strokes of the knife had been formed into a double representation of the human [191] head, a perfect parallel to the type of mask that is associated with the people of the Ivory Coast.

538 Aside from the decorated apinti drum, only some of the 191 workaday art forms of Africa—combs, paddles, mortars, among other such objects—were retained. For their decoration the designs that in Africa had been cut into the base of figures or about the borders of masks had been remembered and reinterpreted in terms of the ancestral cults. And from those memories the Bush Negroes had developed the unique art which is theirs.

538 Thus, in the main, the art was symbolic, and many of the 181 designs represented the urge for reproduction. Some 84 stemmed from the fertility cult, though not entirely of it. There was, for example, the double-bladed food stirrer, [226] which was given by a man to his wife with a curse woven into its curves for the woman if she committed adultery.

538 There were carvings that did not deal with sex at all. On the lower river we sat on the shore as a canoe came up. Prow and stern were carved. On one of the seats was a representation of the head of a feline, done with the utmost realism.

"You have *nigri*?" we asked the man, as we bargained for the seats.

"I will sell you this, but do not ask me what it means."

[501] The bird-headed paddles were also examples of this kind. When laid on their sides, they showed the form of the parrot, or whatever bird they represented—the exaggerated beak, the head, the neck, the wings, and the feet. The [191] design called *Afukutu folo*, an emblem of those who could see into the future, was engraved on many benches on the upper river in particular, and these carvings were parted with only with the greatest reluctance, lest we try

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[Houses and house posts in Ma'lobbi.

[Facing P. 264]

Herskovits & Herskovits I-6 (1929-1930) 1934
Bush Negroes
Surinam

magic on their owners. And there was the Gaukwe woman who brought us a paddle representing the bird she called the *apansa*.

"We Gaukwe people do not eat the apansa," she had whispered to us when we bought the paddle.

5

In the house of the captain of Ma'lobbi we sat and talked of the carvings of the Saramacca people, and as we talked, they brought us some of the things the men of the village had carved.

"Do all men carve?" we asked the chief.

"Not everyone has the spirit. But every young man tries. If a man is good at hunting, or on the river, then perhaps he can get the things he needs to give his wife from others for what he can give the carver. But it is better that he do these things for his wife himself. The women like it better."

Not everyone could make a boat, he said, nor was everyone able to carve the *pau pau dindu*, the intricate "wood within wood" motifs that made a strip go like a twisted snake in and out, in and out, through a design. And not everyone could make a drum. Like that apinti he had there.

It was the opening for which we had been waiting.

We had been admiring this drum since we had come into his house, we said. We remembered it from the first time on our way up river. It was as fine as any we had seen. Had he made it himself?

He smiled his appreciation.

"It is a fine apinti, ai," agreed several of the men sitting about.

An apinti was one of the things we wanted to take to show the white man. This one, especially, we would like to buy. Would he sell it?

He looked at us for a moment, and then gently shook his head. "To make an apinti is not a small thing. Not everyone can make an apinti. I have worked on it for a long time, and it is not yet finished. This drum I will not sell."

We redoubled our urging.

"White man, do you know what it is to make an apinti—an obia drum?"

A man had to have the proper spirit before he might address the god of the tree from which the drum was to be made. When he had felled the tree, he cut off from the trunk the part he wanted to use and took it to his village. Over it he had to pour the blood of a cock which he sacrificed that the gods might come when the drum called them. The maker had also to provide sweet rum and cassava and eggs. The cassava was eaten by the people, but the eggs were for the spirit of the drum, and only half the sweet rum was drunk—the rest was poured over the wood. When the body of the new drum had been fashioned, the people gathered and sang, but they did not dance, for the head yet remained to be made. A pingo, or a deer, might furnish the skin, but these animals were shot where they had been tracked in the bush, and not offered to the drum. Only chickens were given it. And when the drum was complete, then the maker sang his song alone.

"But the drum is not finished yet. It can be played on, for it has a head, and its spirit has been satisfied. But the carving is not yet done. I have worked on it a long time," he repeated. "I want them to play it for my spirit when I am dead."

A silence fell as he finished. There was nothing more to be said.

"White man, we have sat together in pleasure. You have come to the true, true Saramacca from far away. You have bought the carvings of my people. The apinti drum I cannot sell you. But this stool you like I want you to have."

He took up one of the round-topped benches, with carefully worked sides, and four purple-heart inlays on top, each in the shape of a fowl.

"Take it with you to your white man's country. When you show it, write on a paper that the captain of Ma'lobbi made it."

us, with its attendant bench and modeled snake, we had only heard the term.

3

In the dim light of our oil lantern, we listened and wrote in our book, while our informant told us about the Kromanti Mama.

"You must take it down carefully," he said, "or it might harm you."

The figure on the top of the bench was named Agbo. This was the watchman, and to this figure came news of all impending evil. About the neck of the figure was a Kromanti fighting obia. A stout iron ring, with red and blue cloth tied about one-half of it, it rested near the base of the watchman.

The eyes of this watchman were its most arresting feature. They were represented by deep sockets, and the effect was heightened by the beak-like character of the nose. Two ears completed the head, and on the body breasts were modeled. It was the only piece of Bush Negro modeling we had ever seen. This most secret of art forms was evidently little practiced.

"The watchman sees all," said our informant, "the Kromanti Mama knows when there is something about that will harm. She tells the snake."

Coiled about its base, this snake was treated in the same realistic style. The head of the snake and its tail almost met at the side of the clay figure which it encircled.

"His name is Bimbawai," we were told.

The bench itself was not unlike the obia stools we had seen in the shrines of the gods. Its rectangular top, curving toward the center, was fastened to the two boards which formed the legs. Like other obia stools, it was difficult to tell whether, under the thick coating of white clay, the wood was carved or not. In one respect it differed from all others we had seen—the bench wore, fringe-like, a grass skirt of the kind worn by the *kowfo*, the priests. This was suspended from the top of the bench, the cord going outside

the space where the snake was modeled, but never touching it.

The man who was explaining the bench to us pointed once more to the snake. "It is not always lifeless as you see it here," he said.

When the snake came to life, trouble was brewing. It turned red, the color of blood, and all who came into the Kromanti house and saw it were warned of danger.

"How does the snake know when to come to life?"

"It is Agbo, the guard, who tells the snake. When she tells him there is trouble, he turns red, and then we know."

Immunity as well as knowledge was afforded by the magical powers of this stool and its snake and the Kromanti Mama.

"A man who has Kromanti sits down on the stool, and puts Agbo on his head, and when he has done that, nothing can harm him."

Thus is safety attained. But this only comes if the image has been propitiated by the Kromanti men. Rum, not of the sweet kind, must be offered it and prayers transmitted to its spirit on the drum which Kromanti recognizes—the apinti. If this is done, the Kromanti Mama will not lose its power, and the snake will continue to turn the warning color when danger threatens, and the bench will give protection to the men who have the Kromanti obia.

4

Not long after we had entered the bush we saw our first Kromanti dance. The people of several neighboring villages came to our base camp to dance for us. They asked, "Will you be afraid if the dancing brings Kromanti?" We told them we should welcome whatever spirits came.

Late that afternoon canoes brought people to our encampment for the festivities. Some, with an eye to trade, had brought carvings and obias, and, as we sat and talked with them about what should be given for the pieces they offered us, we could watch the dance outside our open hut.

2:Kahn D-5 (1922-1930) 1931
SR: Bush Negroes SR8

DJUKA

The Bush Negroes of Dutch Guiana

BY MORTON C. KAHN

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With an introduction
by Blair Niles and a foreword by Clark Wissler

THE VIKING PRESS
Monocoai · New York

[Title Page]

[P iii]
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1 A [For caption, see category illig P. 204]

2: Kahn D-5 (1922-1930) 1931
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IN NORTH-EASTERN South America, more precisely in the hinterland of Dutch Guiana, there is a unique civilization little known to the white men of this continent. We know much of the strange life of the Congo and of the fascinating customs peculiar to the inhabitants of the Malay jungles, for a number of explorers have brought from the Eastern tropics the interesting accounts of their experiences. But of the Surinam Bush Negro, Djuka, as he calls himself, who nearly two hundred years ago fought his way out of slavery, of the survival of his African customs in the jungles of South America, little has been told.

The flush tides of imperialism have passed over these people, leaving them practically unaltered and unknown, unique among the Negro peoples of the world. They still maintain the life of jungle dwellers of the immemorial past.

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[For explan, see category 16, p.204. --Analyst]

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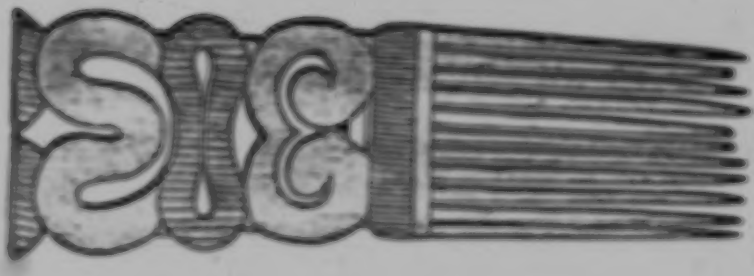

Chapter One

THE BLACK REBELLION

A GUINEA SLAVER, tacking up to Paramaribo. In the hold lay shackled Negroes, their bare bodies glistening with sweat. "Black Ivory" they were called.

Entrapped savages from the West Coast, transported nearly three thousand miles in slaving ships to the Dutch settlement in South America. Three months at sea, and they looked like leather-covered skeletons, those who were still alive.

Packed in a small space, without enough room to lie down, the slaves were forced to take turns at stretching out on the deck to sleep. The others squatted close together, straddling the ones lying down. The night air being considered pernicious, the portholes were closed when evening came, leaving the blacks to suffocate during the fetid dark hours. Sometimes the bare planks, combined with the rolling motion of the ship, rubbed off skin and flesh, leaving patches of bone exposed. Blood and filth were strewn about in an indescrib-

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[For caption, see category 116, p. 204. -- Analyst]

-2:Kahn D-5 (1922-1930) 1931
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Chapter Two

UPRIVER

EIGHT miles an hour the river moves, down long 133
stretches of rapids and fast water, over great rocks in the river-bed. Any sort of outboard motor would be torn to pieces. There is nothing to do but pole upstream in dugout canoes to the Djuka country.

Bush Negro boatmen, with glossy thighs and heaving 502
backs, stand at the bows. They plant their great ten-foot poles in the river-bed and pull against them. As the motion of the boat carries them past the planted poles, they walk back along the gunwales, pushing the poles to the extreme end. They are retrieved, wheeled in a great arc, and again planted in the river-bed. This makes a rare picture in the sunlight on

[for caption, see category 37 16, p.204.-- Analyst]

2:Kahn D-5 (1922-1930) 1931
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Aucaner

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Bush Tap Carved from a Single Piece of Wood. Human Face Motif. Aucaner Tribe, Sara Creek District. This specimen shows striking West African characteristics.
Kahn Congo Collection, American Museum of Natural History

[Facing p. 28]

2:Kahn D-S (1922-1930) 1931
SR8 Bush Negroes SR8

Chapter Three

THE JUNGLE CLEARING

THE first indication of a village is a group of empty canoes made fast on the shore. Behind them, a short distance inland, is the village of Lombe, the first real Bush Negro town at which we stop on the Surinam River.

Villages are seldom situated on the river-bank, but a quarter to a half mile inland. The reasons for this are that the

2:Kaha D-5 (1922-1930) 1931
SR8 Bush Negroes SR8

Chapter Four

THE DANCE

SUNDOWN on the Suriname. Women with breasts like dried tobacco leaves stew hunks of red baboon over the Djuka fires. The old dance gods will stir tonight. Mist is drifting up from the river and blowing between the trees. Colours fade out as darkness falls. The atmosphere of the jungle closes in on us with the night.

As night falls a Bush Negro corial appears on the river. It is followed by four others, all loaded with people from another village three miles downstream. The strangers have come to dance for the bahkra. We have promised them candy and high wine. The women tie bands of nuts about their limbs; the dried nuts rattle.

They bring the drums, the soul of the jungle. The big tom-tom, elaborately carved on the outside, is the *apenti*, or signal drum. The smaller *nanda* and the baby *baboula* (an African

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[for caption, see category 116, p. 204: Analyst]

2:Kahn D-5 (1922-1930) 1931
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Chapter Five

THE GAME TRAIL

ON the rivers we frequently encounter Djukas going downstream to Paramaribo or Albina on lumber rafts. The big logs are fastened together with lianas, twined about stakes driven into holes, and lashed to stout cross-pieces. Three paddlers stand upright on this raft and take it down the river like a canoe.

The lumber is arduously cut, the great trees being felled and chopped square with axes. A tree cut in the jungle will not fall to earth; the surrounding growth holds it upright. Therefore, days are spent in clearing a space of ground where the tree may come down. The vines and lianas must be cut away, and the vast buttressing roots severed. The tree is brought down in this clearing, hewn of its branches, and dragged into the water. Hardwood is too heavy to float, so

[For caption, see category 116, p. 204. - Analyst]

2:Kahn D-5 (1922-1930) 1931
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Chapter Six

FOOD IN THE JUNGLE

THE Bush Negroes investigate our equipment with great delight, and are much amused by our table manners. They gather around and comment on the food. Often they pick up an empty can discarded by Bundle, the cook, and wrinkle their noses in disgust at the smell of it. They seem to prefer their own food. 643 186

1/4 [For caption, see category 116, p. 204. - Analyst]

2:Kahn D-5 (1922-1930) 1931
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Chapter Seven

THE ORGANIZATION OF LIFE

THERE are six tribes of Bush Negroes. These tribal divisions date back to the black rebellion in the eighteenth century. Bands of rebels fled into the bush together, and remained together within their jungle home. In Stedman's narrative of the revolt we read of a punitive expedition being sent out against the bands living along the "Serimaca" and Upper Copenam Rivers. After years of incessant warfare, a treaty of peace was concluded in 1749 with the "Serimaca rebels." The descendants of this group are known today as the *Saramaccaner* tribe. Another outbreak of rebels occurred in the Tempati Creek district; they won their freedom in 1761 by a treaty signed at the Ouca Plantation, from which they came to be called *Aucaners*. A third band of rebels, under the command of the famous Chief Bonny, probably 619

1/A [For caption, see category 116, p. 204.—Analyst]

2: Kahn D-5 (1922-1930) 1931
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Boni
Paramacca

façades of their huts are often elaborately carved. The drums and other Bush Negro implements take the usual West African form, but the treatment of the motifs among the Boni differs somewhat from that given by the other Bush Negro tribes. The spiral, snake, liana, and coil designs are less in evidence; the patterns are usually more angular in character than similar pieces from the Saramaccaner and Aucaner. Animal, human, and bird figures are more common in the designs of these French Guiana tribesmen, as the collection brought back for the American Museum of Natural History attests. Also, personal decoration by scar-tissue patterns seems to be less in evidence among the Boni. In all other respects, however, their culture seems identical with that of the other Djukas.

The Paramacca tribe, now numbering about 500 in population, was founded by one man and two women, who were slaves on a plantation in the Upper Commewyne River. They escaped by way of the Tempati Creek in 1813, then travelled over the watershed to the head of the Paramacca Creek, a tributary of the Marowyne River. For a long time they built villages at the head of the Tempati Creek and later at the head of the Paramacca Creek, being afraid to go into the

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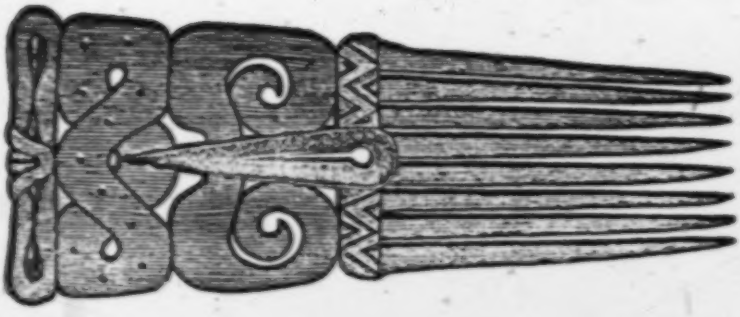

Chapter Eight

MARRIAGE AND THE FAMILY

THE Bush Negro family is not a family in our sense of the word. In the Surinam jungle the Djuka family is polygamous and matrilineal. The unit of society is the hut, where the mother and her children live.

In order to understand the marriage customs of the Bush Negro tribes it is first necessary to forget for the time being the system of patriarchal family life under which the white men of our age live. One unconsciously takes the customs of one's own society as a norm, and passes moral judgment on exotic customs by their deviation from that norm. This habit of thinking must be avoided as far as possible in considering a primitive society, though it is difficult even for an agile mind to make dispassionately the transition from one culture in which the father is dominant, to another, in which his position is not important. On the other hand, many of our

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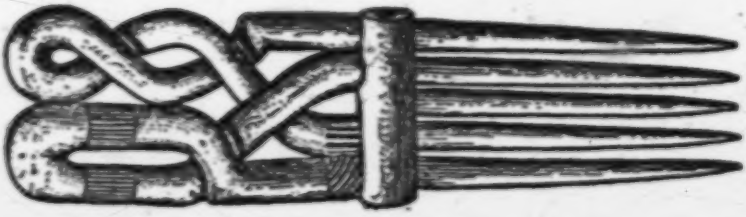
Saramaccaner



Chapter Nine

MEDICINE AND MAGIC

NO one in Djuka land dies a natural death. Death is caused by witchcraft. At Santi Gron on the Saramacca River, preparations are being made for a burial. The whole village is excited. The women wailing are the relatives of the dead man. Children are crying because they see others crying. Unseen drums throb dully, making the hot air pulsate. The corpse lies in an open shed with only three walls—a death house (*dede oso*). Two girls of fifteen or sixteen are fanning it steadily to keep the flies away. The man died more than a week ago; all this time the body had been lying on a platform out in the tropical heat to decompose.

It is black magic that kills. Therefore the Bush Negroes make an effort to find out who made the magic that killed this man. An ancient ritual is employed. Three to ten days the corpse is left unburied, and in the humid heat the flesh undergoes a partial liquefaction. The putrescent fluid is gathered in a calabash cup and carried around from door to door.

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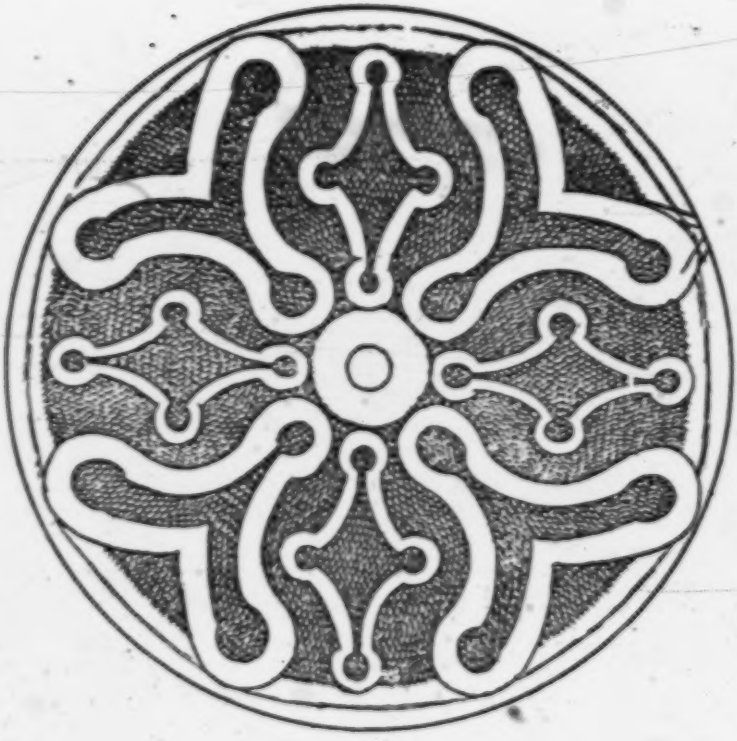
SR8 Bush Negroes SR8



Chapter Ten

DJUKA TALK

THE Bush Negroes have two languages. The ordinary tongue, phrases from which are scattered throughout this book, is known as talkee-talkee. It is the common *lingua franca* of the entire colony, used not only by the Djukas, but also by some of the Indians and by the Town Negroes of

[For caption, see category 116, p. 204. - Analyst]

2: Kahn D-5 (1922-1930) 1931
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Saramaccaner

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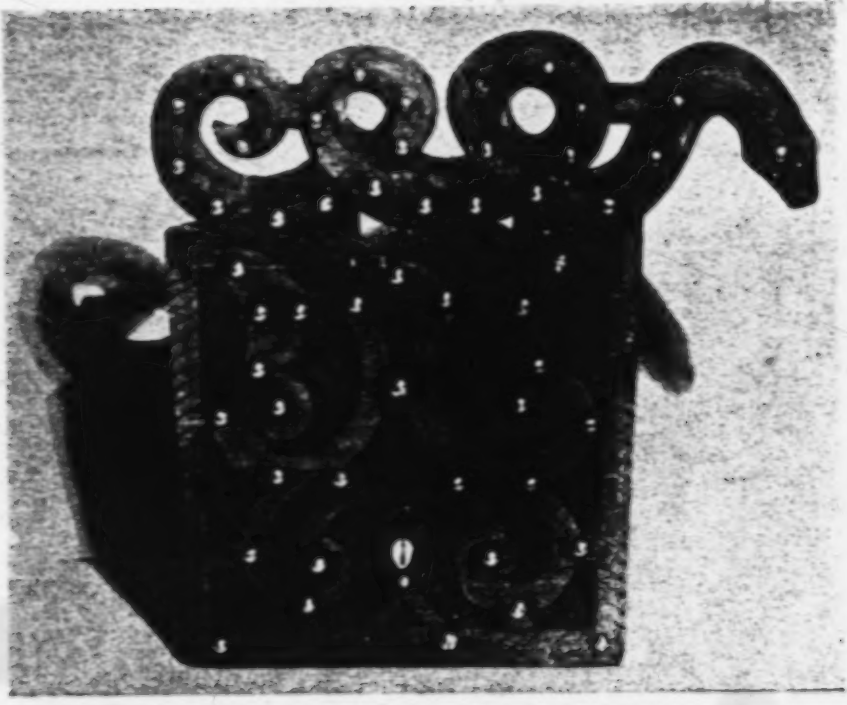

Snake Motif Bench Top or "Obeiah Bangi" (Sacred Bench) Carved from a Single Piece. *Saramaccaner Tribe.* On other benches and trays and similar pieces of wood carving the coil and serpentine motifs are often executed in such a way as to form figures of men and women.

Kahn-Granger Collection, American Museum of Natural History

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2:Kahn D-5 (1922-1930) 1931
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Aucaner

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Open Work Bench Top Carved from a Single Piece, Human Face Motif. *Aucaner Tribe.*
Kahn-Granger Collection, American Museum of Natural History

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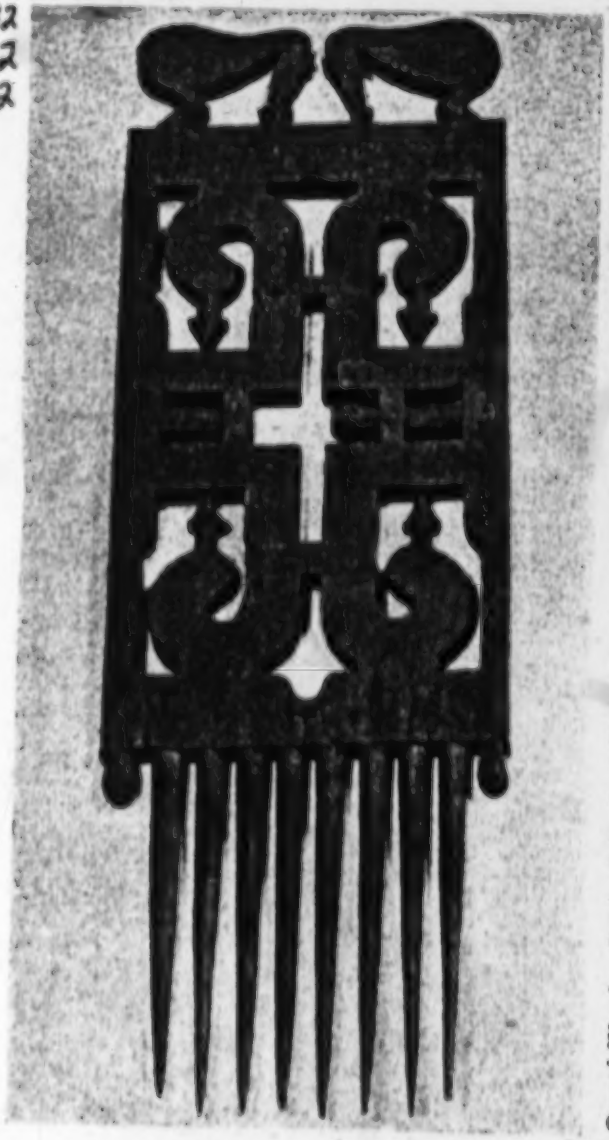

Carved Wooden Comb of the Boni Tribe, French Guiana. The central cross is a symbol of a woman surrounded by four phallic symbols in the form of curved arrows.
Kahn-Granger Collection, American Museum of Natural History

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2:Kahn D-5 (1922-1930) 1931
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Carved Wooden Comb, Human Face Motif. *Boni Tribe.*
Kahn-Granger Collection, American Museum of Natural History

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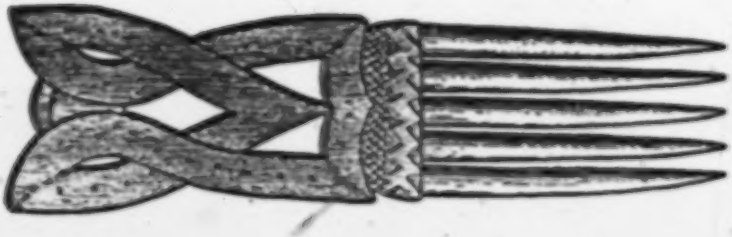

Chapter Twelve

PRIMITIVE ART

THE sense of beauty is not absent in the jungle. The Djukas have definite æsthetic feelings and in their wood carving they have a well-developed and conventionalized art form. Art is highly socialized and universally appreciated among them. There are definite artistic conventions and common conventionalized forms. 517

Among ourselves the production of artistic objects is confined to a small group of especially gifted individuals, whereas among the Bush Negroes it is a regular part in the life of proportionately many more individuals. Common objects of everyday use, which among ourselves are designed for utility alone, are developed by the Bush Negroes into elaborate objects of art. They represent one of the most characteristic features of any Bush Negro village. One is sure to find in every village the carved plates and long-tined combs and pierced decorations that constitute the art of the Bush Negroes.

[For caption, see category 116, p. 204.—Analyst]

2: Kahn D-5 (1922-1930) 1931
SR8 Bush Negroes SR8

tion of falling in love, and the woman is inordinately proud of her pieces of wood since each one betokens the affection of a male. A great part of the love-life among the Djukas is wrapped up in these carved household implements.

Those unfortunate natives who are not clever at handling a knife must trade fish or game or some other personal possession for sanni produced by a more deft handicraftsman. Almost any Bush Negro can hunt, fish, and care for a wife, but a man's value is enhanced in the eyes of the woman when he can carve artistically. The women appreciate him and the men respect him. Wood carving, therefore, is assiduously cultivated by the Bush Negroes from early childhood.

As sanni is a prized commodity everywhere, exchangeable for female favours, a great deal of time is spent on each individual piece. A single comb may take weeks to carve. The women are very good judges of sanni, and can tell a good piece at a glance. With such a critical audience, the Djuka artist is careful of his skill, and few awkward or ill-formed designs are seen. Boys between the ages of eight and ten years may be proficient carvers, and critical elders preside over their work, ready to point out any minute mistake. The father or uncle who is expert with the knife will train his son or nephew in the same tradition, so that certain families are known for their beautiful work.

This erotic significance of the wood carvings makes them difficult to obtain. The woman who sells one is not parting with a domestic utensil so much as with a treasured memento. Sentimental attachments are bound to appear. As

2: Kahn D-5 (1922-1930) 1931
SR8 Bush Negroes SR8

one woman said: "He gave me this piece when we were first married. I won't part with it now." Usually an elaborate parley is necessary. The women are undecided whether to sell or not. They laugh, giggle, put their finger coyly in their mouths, joke bashfully with bystanders, and cannot make up their minds as to the price. They never know how much to ask for a piece. Sometimes they will mention a preposterous figure, hoping like a naïve child that the strange bahkra will pay that much. But on such occasions a rebuke will make them more reasonable. Once an arrogant witch doctor intervened in a transaction with a Bush Negro woman, demanding angrily that she receive an exorbitant payment. His anger was squelched with a few sharp words, and, contrite, he sat up all night to carve an ornate implement to present to the bahkra as a peace-offering. Cunning Adjobo, the medicine man!

The Bush Negro implements are carved out of jungle wood. Some are made of lignum vitæ, the hardest wood known. A few of them are made of soft wood, light and spongy, but these are not popular. The small paddles are used for stirring in the cooking pots, and the combs are actually used for the hair. They are never worn as personal ornaments, and when not in use are hung up on the walls of the hut. The utensils are all made with common trade jackknives and compasses which are used as dividers. It is principally with these dividers that the serpentine motifs are executed. After the carving is finished the piece is smoothed off by rubbing it with matted grass and river

2:Kahn D-5 (1922-1930) 1931
SR8 Bush Negroes SR8
Saramaccaner

412
501
532

Pot Stirrers and Canoe Paddle Handle.
Saramaccaner Tribe.

[Facing p. 196 (A)]

2:Kahn D-5 (1922-1930) 1931
SR8 Bush Negroes SR8
Boni
Aucaner

412
532

Clothes Beater and Food Paddle. *Boni Tribe.*

Ceremonial Sword and Pot Stirrer. *Aucaner Tribe.*

*[Facing p. 196 (R)]

2:Kahn D-5 (1922-1930) 1931
SR8 Bush Negroes SR8
Aucaner

412
532

Pot Stirrers. Stylized human figure and snake motifs.
Aucaner Tribe.

[Facing p. 196 (c)]

2: Kahn D-5 (1922-1930) 1931
SR8 Bush Negroes SR8

sand. A few chisels and carpenter's tools can occasionally be found. Where compasses or dividers cannot be obtained, a nail and piece of string are often used to execute the involved serpentine patterns.

Bush Negro sanni is not used for trading purposes. A few pieces find their way down to the coast, of course, but they are never articles of commerce among the Djukas. In some villages, and particularly among the Paramacca tribe, it is practically impossible to obtain many carvings. But the willingness to part with these objects naturally varies with the village and the individual. Being known to the natives greatly facilitates trade.

One outstanding feature of this work is the complete absence of colour. The finished piece shows the natural hue of the wood, and rarely anything more. An occasional variation is obtained by inlaying with racuda wood, brownheart, or purpleheart, but tints and dyes are seldom applied. A different shade is also obtained once in a while by branding or burning the wood with a hot iron. The Aucaners, who paint red and black devices on their large canoe paddles, represent exceptions to the general rule of showing only the natural wood shades.

Nearly all the pieces are utilitarian in origin and purpose, but some of them are so highly carved as to be of little practical use. These are much prized as gift pieces. The trays are actually used to carry food on, and also for winnowing rice. The stirring paddles dip into the food pot every evening. After being used they are washed with river water and hung up on a peg.

2:Kahn D-5 (1922-1930) 1931
SR8 Bush Negroes SR8
Aucaner

412
532

Pot Stirrer and Hair Combs. The comb in the centre is three feet long. *Aucaner Tribe.*

[Facing p. 197]

2:Kahn D-5 (1922-1930) 1931
SR8 Bush Negroes SR8

412 [501] hung up on a peg. The canoe paddles are actually employed every day on the river, and the flails beat the day's wash of soiled togas and coyos.

352 [784] Since it is taboo to sit on the ground, a large number of stools are made, pierced and decorated, with now and then a tiny cabinet inside them. Wooden locks that actually work [414] are seen on the doors, especially in Aucaner villages, guarding the treasures inside. These are West African survivals; the same type of device can be found in several parts of the Old Continent. They are huge affairs often two feet in length. Door sills and door posts, bows and sterns of canoes, 532 canoe seats and calabash gourds (occasionally decorated by a woman) are all embellished with ornamentation of great intricacy. It is amazing that these designs could be wrought without preliminary designing, which would seem to be necessary, but so far as we were able to observe there is no conscious planning before the carving begins.

The symbolism employed in these pieces of sanni is limited to a few conventionalized motifs. Moreover, there is a variation in the symbolism peculiar to the individual artist, which is not comprehensible solely from an examination of the piece itself. Unless one can locate the original carver, it is impossible, for the most part, to be certain what the symbols mean. The same motif will be differently interpreted by different natives, and often has no objective meaning. It is therefore impossible to undertake an elaborate interpretation of Djuka symbolism.

There are a few outstanding designs found on a large

2:Kahn D-5 (1922-1930) 1931
SR8 Bush Negroes SR8
Saramaccaner
Aucaner
442
532

Pot Stirrer and Hair Comb.
Saramaccaner Tribe.

Pot Stirrer.
Aucaner Tribe.

[Facing p. 198]

2: Kahn D-5 (1922-1930) 1931
SR8 Bush Negroes SR8

number of pieces. The first of these is the snake motif. It takes the form of serpentine coils and twists, fancifully involuted and superimposed. The same general design is also interpreted as a liana motif, referring to the twisted tendrils of the jungle vines, convoluted and snarled. The second most important is the chain motif, an attempt to duplicate the links of iron chains.

The vulva motif is commonly found, and is consciously employed as a love symbol. The natives have no hesitation in interpreting this design as referring to the female genitalia; it is impressed on articles as a symbol of desire. The bill-bird, or toucan, provides another motif that can be recognized on a variety of pieces. Another West African survival is the bone motif, for the human scapula is frequently seen conventionalized on calabash objects. A few of the white man's objects also furnish themes for wood carvings, such as the rifle stock.

Other motifs are entirely without symbolic intention, and represent symmetry and proportion only. The cross-hatch and notch motifs are African in origin, and can be found on West African objects. Other details of execution vary widely, without especial significance. The tines of the combs may be rounded or square. The food paddles may have two handles and one blade, or two blades and one handle. The size of the pieces varies considerably, from small combs a few inches long to the great six-foot canoe paddles. Outside of the vulva and penis motifs there is little erotic symbolism.

A peculiarity of Aucaner wood carvings is the system of

2:Kahn D-5 (1922-1930) 1931
SR8 Bush Negroes SR8
Aucaner
Boni

A peculiarity of Aucaner wood carvings is the system of
532 sign language imprinted thereon. If some of the pieces are
212 examined closely, it will be seen that they have odd symbols apparently placed at random, not conforming to the general pattern of the piece. These marks represent personal messages from the giver to the recipient, special indications or signs of affection, comparable to the marks at the ends of Victorian *billets doux*, indicating the place to kiss. Conventionalized letters are known as *schriefie*, a Bush Negro word that means "writing." Animal, bird, and human figure motifs are more common among the Boni and Aucaner tribes.

322 Besides the practical implements in everyday use there are
532 a number of trick pieces apparently made for no other purpose than to show the virtuosity of the artist. Thus there are pieces where a loose bauble is placed in a cup from which it cannot be forced. Some of the stools have tiny doors which
[352] open, and some of them are folding stools which close up like camp stools, yet are made from one piece of wood. There are stirring paddles with loose rings around the handles, carved from the same piece of wood and undetachable. Some have chains of wood attached, with separate links, all from one piece of wood. The Bush Negroes are also fond of mak-
[293] ing bush-knives in wood, or ornamental swords to be worn on ceremonial occasions. Small knives ordinarily seen in metal are also carved out of wood.

There are two general types of decoration, with one or two subsidiary devices. The commonest consists of pierced ornamental work, made from a single piece of wood. Except

2: Kahn D-5 (1922-1930) 931
SR8 Bush Negroes SR8

for benches, no pieced specimens are ever found. Because of the practical necessity of having a large number of benches, and the difficulty of executing both legs and seat out of a continuous piece of wood, benches are commonly made of several pieces of wood fitted together, as can be seen in the photographs. A number of them, however, are made from a single piece, and this continuity is preferred by the Djukas. The Africanesque crescent stools are carved from a single log.

Relief work is the second form of decoration. It occurs in the form of high relief on the plates and trays. It can be found to a modified degree on door-posts and other carved objects. Ornaments in low relief are represented by the calabash pieces, which are carved when green and allowed to dry.

Branding is done with a hot knife or wire, or else the piece may be charred by holding it in the flames. Circles are burned into the pattern by heating empty cartridge shells red hot and pressing them against the wood. Brass upholstery tacks, obtained in the white settlements of Paramaribo and Albina, are in especial favour, and some pieces are heavily laden with these. They fit in very well with the general spirit of Djuka art, and although the material is anachronistic, the effect is not.

Religious carvings, unlike the practical implements, are executed with a crudeness that is surprising. The fetish to the god Aflamu which was brought back to the Museum is nothing more than a rough section of pole with a crudely hewn face and seeds for eyes. Other religious pieces are

2: Kahn D-5 (1922-1930) 1931
SR8 Bush Negroes SR8

532 likewise roughly done. The reason for this seems to derive
778 from the general nature of primitive religion as it occurs among the Bush Negroes. Two explanations of this were given by native informants. If the god is a good god, and well disposed toward the black man, he doesn't care whether his fetishes are well executed or not. If he is a bad god he is going to continue to be bad, regardless of whether much time is spent on his fetishes or not. Another Bush Negro, questioned about this, said: "Me no sabby de Gadu luku"—"I don't know what God looks like." The primitive æsthetic feeling, apparently, is bound up with practical ends. There is absolutely no care or pains taken with religious objects, whereas erotic objects are finished with great skill.

322 There seems to be considerable variation between the tribes
184 of Djukas in the character of their art work. The Aucaner
532 wood carvings have, in general, a more refined and delicate cast than the wood carvings of their neighbours, the Saramaccaners and Boni. The differences in treatment of the motifs among the Bush Negro tribes and the general dissimilarities and likenesses of the carvings are best understood by consulting the accompanying illustrations.

412 The combs vary from two and a half inches to twenty-
322 four inches in length, and even these more immense combs see actual service. They are always made of a single piece, including the tines. For the most part they are made of harder woods, with occasional inlays. A number of them are trick pieces, with little ingenious devices that catch and hold the imagination of the primitive. For comparison, a West

2: Kahn D-5 (1922-1930) 1931
SR8 Bush Negroes SR8

But when the necessities of life have been provided for,
and leisure is at hand for more beautiful and tender endeavours, the Bush Negro, seated before his evening fire, sharpens his knife and begins marking, with fine, deft lines, the graceful outlines of another paddle or comb to please his woman.

List of Carvings Shown at Chapter Openings with Explanation of Symbolism

Carved Bench Top, *Saramaccaner Tribe:* Eight Women Dancing Around a Gadu Pole (title page)

Carved Bench Top, *Boni Tribe:* Stylization of Male and Female Figures (page 3)

Hair Comb, *Aucaner Tribe* (page 7)

Carved Pierced Bench Top, *Saramaccaner Tribe:* Two Male Figures Each Holding a Snake Aloft (page 27)

Carved Bench Top, *Saramaccaner Tribe:* Two Highly Stylized Human Figures (page 39)

Hair Comb, *Aucaner Tribe:* Male and Female Snakes (page 53)

Carved Bench Top, *Boni Tribe:* Vulva Surrounded by Phallic Symbols (page 63)

Carved Inner Surface of Calabash Gourd, African Bone Motif, *Saramaccaner Tribe* (page 83)

Carved Bench Top, *Saramaccaner Tribe:* Frog Design Executed with Serpentine Technique (page 91)

Hair Comb, *Aucaner Tribe:* Vulva Motif; the triangles on the cross bar represent snake teeth (page 119)

Hair Comb, *Saramaccaner Tribe:* Male and Female Figures (page 133)

Carved Outer Surface of Calabash Gourd, *Saramaccaner Tribe* (page 161)

Comb from Nigeria, West Africa (page 175)

Hair Comb, *Saramaccaner Tribe* (page 193)

2: Kahn D-5 (1922-1930) 1931
SR8 Bush Negroes SR8

Appendix B

SYMBOLS IN DJUKA CARVINGS

In the work of the Djukas sexual symbols are frequent. These symbols must not be taken to indicate preoccupation with lascivious interests, for they are not always even representations of coitus or of sexual desire on the part of the male donor of the carved wooden piece upon which the symbols occur. They are sometimes expressions, through conventional and decorative signs, of the entire fertility cult, embracing the Earth Mother (Mama fu a gron) and kindred spirits. The figures marked with the letter P are taken from an article by Jonkheer Van Panhuys (see bibliography).

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[114]

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● 532

Explanation of Symbols

1 P A bird

2 P Monkey head

3 P An electric eel

4 P Snakes

5 P A star with two tails, symbolic of a comet

6 P A parrot tongue

7 P A parrot tongue

8 P Snakes

9 P Two chickens

10 P Anchor and two fowl

11 P Interpreted as birds in a furious battle, but possibly the symbol of a phallus

12 That the carved symbols on the gift piece are true in conveying their message of desire

13 P Bird killing a snake

14 P A centipede

2; Kahn D-5 (1922-1930) 1931
SR8 Bush Negroes SR8

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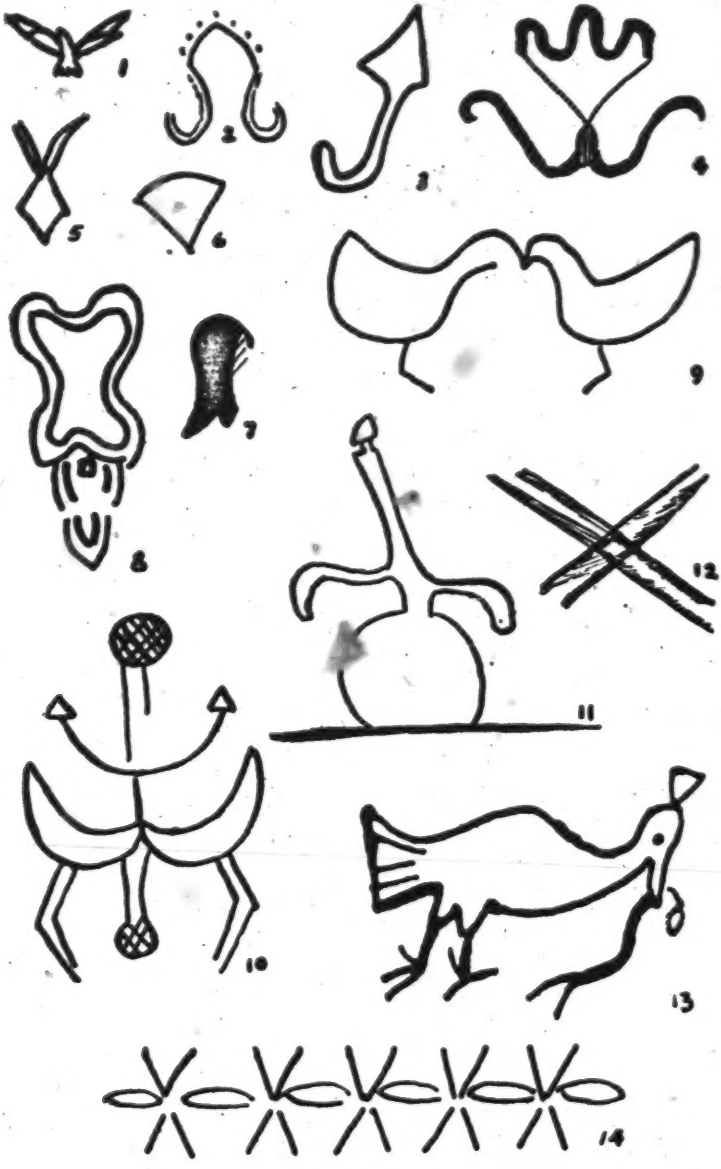


2:Kahn D-5 (1922-1930) 1931
SR8 Bush Negroes SR8

Explanation of Symbols

● 532

15 P A water fowl

16 P Figure of a man

17 P Figure of a man

18 P A human figure

19 P Human figure

20 P A human figure

21 P A human figure

22 P A human figure

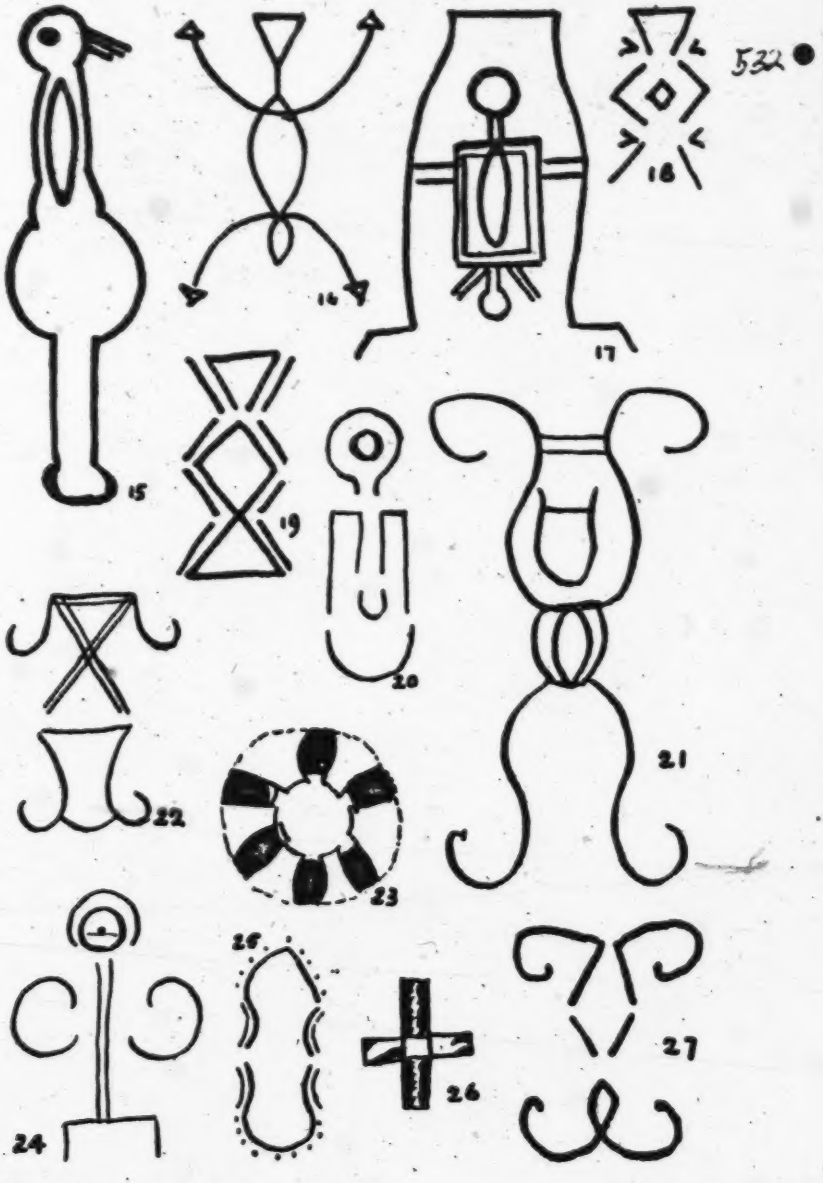
23 P Symbol of a man

24 P A human figure

25 P A woman

26 A symbol of a woman

27 P Symbolized woman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2:Kahn D-5 (1922-1930) 1931
SR8 Bush Negroes SR8

Explanation of Symbols

●532

28 Symbol of a woman in the form of a duck

29 P A European woman

30 P Figure of a woman

31 Figure of a woman

32 P Symbolized woman

33 P A woman

34 P A human head

35 P Human head?

36 P Human head with feathers

37 A coffin. "His desire will last until death"

38 Two coffins. A hope that his loved one will lie with him in the same grave

39 A symbol of affection

40 P A man running with a snake on his head

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2:Kahn D-5 (1922-1930) 1931
SR8 Bush Negroes SR8

Explanation of Symbols

●532

41 P Tattoo marks simulating a dancing man

42 P Bush Negro hut upside down

43 An affectionate greeting

44 An affectionate greeting

45 A curse upon anyone who states that the carving is not a good one

46 Curse motif, as 45

47 P Man with two fingers and two toes (webbed) symbol of a water spirit

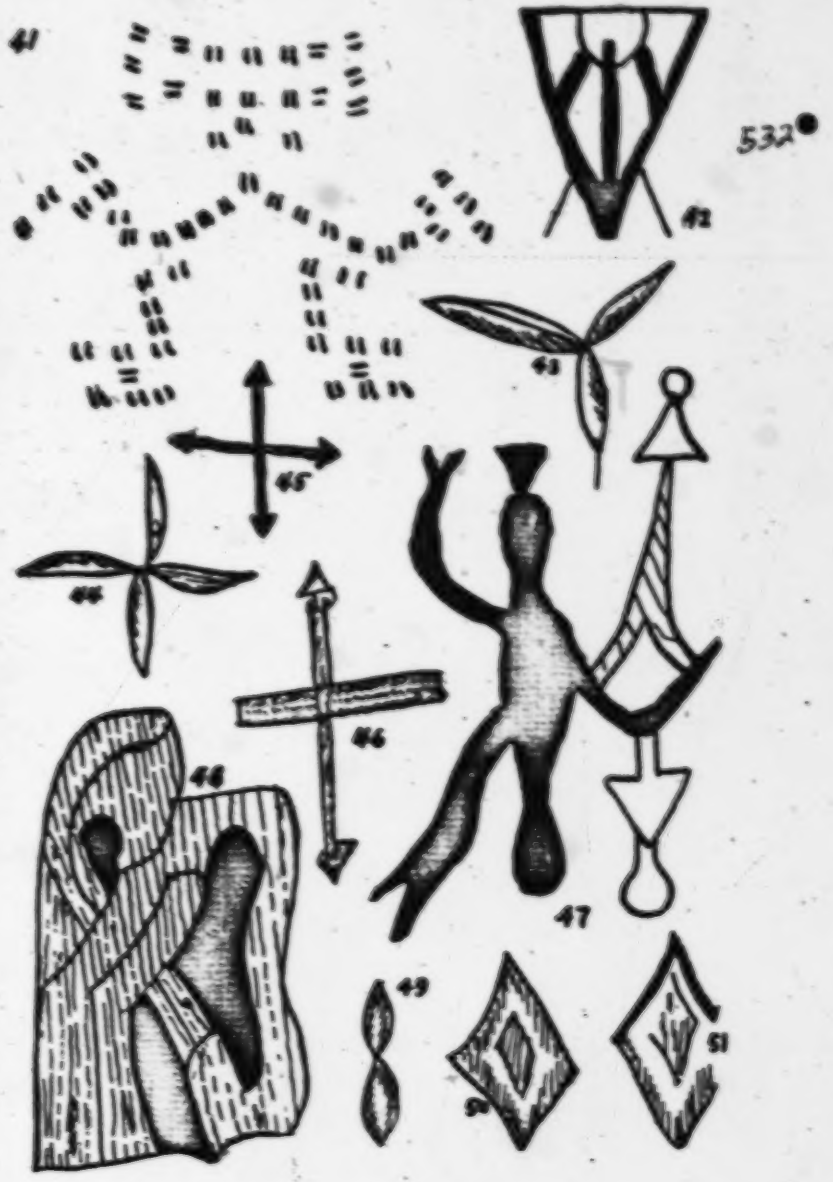
48 Symbol of a man and woman engaged in the act of coitus

49 Vulva symbol

50 Vulva symbol; Desire

51 Vulva symbol

2:Kahn D-5 (1922-1930) 1931
SR8 Bush Negroes SR8



2: Kahn D-5 (1922-1930) 1931
SR8 Bush Negroes SR8

Explanation of Symbols

●532

52 A human face with vulva motifs; a woman

53 Vulva motif

54 P Man without a head giving forth his sex energy, here represented by a ball and arrow

55 Symbol of a woman being held with an arrow (penis) and therefore unable to escape

56 Symbol of a man about to engage in the act of coitus

57 P Man and woman in the act of coitus

58 P Figure of a man in the act of coitus

59 P Woman in the act of coitus receiving a phallus

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/250 cont./

751 Next in the preoccupations of the Refugee Blacks come the ɔbia called tapu, that is to say, protection. There exist numerous kinds adapted to the various dangers of a supernatural order (protection against other divinities, against the maleficent entities of the bush, against the wisimɛ̃).

[796] [754] The Ampuku are generally asked for tapu against the wisimɛ̃. We saw a remarkable one in front of the house of F... (Dju). Its owner was not a little proud of it and he talked about it to us freely.

751 798 [532] The ɔbia, placed at ground level in front of the door, was composed of a crude representation in clay of a head in which appeared two wide-open eyes: in front of it were planted in the ground three plant clusters including a planting of ground-nuts and one of maize; the whole was topped by a small basket containing an egg. It was necessary to water the ɔbia with a certain infusion of leaves at regular intervals to restore its force.

751 754 This ɔbia insured infallible protection against wisimɛ̃; in fact, none of them would have been able to cross the threshold without stubbing his toe on the door frame in spite of all his precautions: F... stated that his ɔbia constituted by this fact an effective means of detection of wisimɛ̃, for it was enough for him to invite suspects to enter his hut, to know what to think: the wisimɛ̃ refused, for fear of thus being given away in the eyes of all; one could thus at least pin down suspicions.

751 [411] Other ɔbia are called sama mɔ̃fu tɛ̃ky (ɔbia against "people's mouths," that is, people's jealousy). They are nearly always seen on fine guns; they have a cord to hold them made of mɔriti palm fibers, to which two cowries are fastened.

755 The ɔbia intended to treat diseases generally have for support a calabash containing the infusion of leaves and a ball of pɛmba (kaolin). The person concerned sprinkles himself several times a day with this liquid.

/259 cont./

Cult of Mama gɔ̃. Mama gɔ̃, mother of the earth, is represented by a crude statue of white clay provided with enormous breasts, symbol of fecundity, which can be seen in a little hut situated on the open place of Boniville village. Each year, when the time for cutting the clearings approaches, the grand man, surrounded by many other people, prays to the god to grant fertility to the plantings. If rain does not fall, an offering of water and tafia is made and the statue is sprinkled.

The Boni do not appear to associate the idea of women's fecundity with that of the fertility of the soil, and we have not heard anyone say that the grand man prays on this subject.

Neither do they appear to have a very clear idea about the relationships of this worship with that of the gɔ̃ gadu, local gods of the soil.

Every three years a great possession dance takes place in Boniville on January 1. /260/ in which the Papa gadu gods dance in front of the sanctuary of Mama gɔ̃. We have not been able to obtain specific information on the meaning of this rite.

Cult of the gɔ̃ gadu. It is assumed that every portion of land is under the sway of a local god, gɔ̃ gadu. Its power is limited only by the fertility of the soil, and he who neglects its worship cannot be attacked in his person or in his goods, but only punished by a poor harvest.

What is the nature of these gods, what is their place in the cosmogony? These are questions which not one of our informants had ever asked himself. In their minds, gɔ̃ gadu has a de facto existence, and is rendered de facto worship. This worship consists essentially of:

--Offerings made at the moment of planting;

--The observance of a local day of rest, kina dɛ, corresponding to the god's day of rest.